



'Tis the season for innovation in Holyoke

As the final 18-foot, 800-lb. steel beam of the \$165 million **Massachusetts Green, High-Performance Computing Center** was put into place at a topping off ceremony on Nov. 29, there were also a number of smaller but equally significant positive steps forward occurring on the Holyoke innovation landscape.

The City of Holyoke has won a five-year, Mass. Department of Public Health award to foster food security and urban agriculture. Even as winter approaches, thought is being given to new areas that can serve as urban gardens in Holyoke and new networking opportunities with sustainable agricultural organizations in the Pioneer Valley. Some of the ideas being discussed include the possibility of creating a food storage and distribution center in Holyoke, using clean energy and energy efficient technologies. There is also ongoing discussion to use the waste heat from the Computing Center to heat commercial urban greenhouses under this strategy. These are building blocks for an urban agriculture strategy.

The final version of **the Innovation-Based Economic Development Strategy for Holyoke and the Pioneer Valley** is now available. The study was prepared by HDR Decision Economics, in association with Fairfield Index and the Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University. The document details an economic development strategy for Holyoke and the region, and provides insights for strategies to boost opportunities in other distressed, formerly industrial cities in the Commonwealth outside the core Boston metropolitan area. The report can be accessed here. [<http://www.innovateholyoke.com/>]

The property at **130 Appleton Street** in Holyoke, adjacent to the Massachusetts Green High-Performance Computing Center and the Holyoke Police Station, has been transferred to city ownership. The property itself is envisioned as a “shovel ready” project to be a prime development site in the Innovation District. The city is moving ahead with a more flexible Tax Increment Financing program to attract future private investment for redevelopment of this and other older mill buildings. These activities reinforce the city’s commitment to the site-ready/permit ready strategy recommended by the Holyoke Innovation District Task Force.

Maker College, a Holyoke-based entrepreneurial and educational initiative that seeks to blend two business models – a member-supported fabrication shop and a technology accelerator – is making progress with attracting potential investors as well as refining its corporate structure. Its goal is to fund and train 20 new physical product start-up companies each year. As a result of **Ben Einstein**'s Idea Mill presentation in October, Maker College has generated quite a buzz, and Einstein is receiving assistance and guidance from a number of individuals and entities. Maker College promises to serve as a catalyst in building the capacity of Holyoke and the Pioneer Valley as a place to shape new products and new companies. Stay tuned.

With the launch of the **Massachusetts Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative** in November by **Governor Deval Patrick, Edward T. Leyden**, President, Ben Franklin Design & Manufacturing in Agawam has been named as co-chair of this statewide initiative that will promote innovation, workforce development, access to capital and technical assistance to bolster the state's manufacturing sector, which currently employs about 260,000 in the Commonwealth. The first meeting of an expanded leadership team of the **Precision Manufacturing Regional Alliance Project (PMRAP)**, a local advanced manufacturing initiative, was held recently at Hoppe Technologies in Chicopee, with recent additions of firms from Holyoke and Greenfield. PMRAP is serving as a working laboratory for the Commonwealth's efforts to develop and validate new approaches to workforce development. In addition, the City of Holyoke is compiling a manufacturers' directory to promote business-to-business relationships in Holyoke.

On the clean energy front, **Holyoke Gas & Electric** said that the "up tick" is continuing, following the Energy Workshop held in Holyoke at Open Square in November. Some 11 proposals have been received to create test beds for new energy technology, and there are ongoing efforts to declare Holyoke as an official test bed location within the state's economic development plans. In addition to having 2.5 megawatts of its 4.5 megawatt solar farm go on line, Holyoke Gas & Electric is also moving ahead with plans for fiber upgrades. And, the utility, in partnership with the city of Holyoke, will be installing two electrical-vehicle charging stations. These developments highlight the unique capabilities of Holyoke Gas & Electric to leverage its renewable energy resources to attract new investment and create new economic opportunities.

A new collaborative effort is underway to bring a dedicated person to build cooperative programs between employers and Holyoke schools, funded in part with a pledge for \$30,000 from the **Regional Employment Board of Hampden County (REBHC)**. The REBHC is working with business and school leaders to securing matching investments. The total cost of the program is \$90,000, and plans are to have this program up and running by the end of February in 2012. The program will help to create pathways to jobs and to increase student motivation and achievement.

27 Gaylord Textiles LLC from South Hadley has applied for \$2.5 million in U.S. Department of Energy funding for its high-speed, digital inkjet printing on textiles initiative. This innovative technology promises to transform textile printing from wet

process to digital in New England, reducing energy consumption and the use of toxic chemicals, while dramatically enhancing productivity. Private sector firms have pledged more than \$1 million of in-kind services to support the proposal. Under the plan, the new printer would be built and installed by the end of 2013. A decision on federal funding is expected in February 2012. The effort underscores the role that collaborative partnerships can play in helping to rebuild the region's manufacturing sector. Partners in this effort include the state Office of Technical Assistance, the federal U.S. Army Soldier Systems Center, and industries in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. MTC's Innovation Institute has pledged \$50,000 into the proposal and has been facilitating this initiative since 2007.

As a way of nurturing talent, with the new computing center serving as a catalyst, **Five Colleges, Inc.** - the ongoing partnership between Amherst, Smith, Mt. Holyoke and Hampshire colleges and the University of Massachusetts - is looking to develop a more explicit collaborative relationship between itself and the institutions of higher learning around the Springfield region. Holyoke is continuing to work on a master plan with Cisco to make it a member of **Cisco Smart + Connected Communities. Holyoke Community College** is a primary partner in this effort. **Cisco**, one of the industry partners in the new Computing Center, is also looking to connect with ongoing efforts being undertaken by Five Colleges, Inc.

In addition, work is ongoing to build community forums in advance of a funding proposal to the National Science Foundation's "Continuous Collaborative Computational Cloud", or "C⁴" program in March of 2012. The funding program seeks to promote cyber-learning and workforce development. **Rick Adrion**, professor of Computer Science at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, is guiding this effort.

Katie Stebbins has been hired to serve as the project manager with responsibility to support the transition from planning to implementation for the strategies adopted by the Holyoke Innovation District Task Force. Katie, a city planner, recently served as project manager for the very successful October 2011 Idea Mill at Open Square in Holyoke. She can be reached at Katiestebbins413@gmail.com. Each strategy has at least one organization in the lead role. Katie will help these lead organizations identify and pursue opportunities with each specific strategy serving as a blueprint. Katie will report to the Task Force co-chairs, Kathy Anderson and Tim Brennan, who have formed a leadership team comprised of the lead organizations for each strategy. One of Katie's priorities will be to enable Task Force members to track the work of lead organizations via the web. During this transition phase, Katie's contract is being underwritten by the MTC's Innovation Institute.